

tion. The successors of the mound-builders, either more or less remotely, were the North American Indians. Through them, should it be possible to recover any traditionary history, there might be a dim and uncertain, but still a welcome light thrown into the darkness of that oblivion which has hitherto enveloped the men who built the great works of the Scioto, Miami, and Mississippi valleys.

And such traditions do exist. It is the object of this volume to present them in a form that may make them valuable for antiquarian purposes. The author has had opportunities for examining the mounds of North and South America possessed probably by no other person, and, as will appear in the course of the volume, has devoted many years to the examination of them.

In the course of these examinations, I became acquainted with the remarkable man, whose name appears on the titlepage of this volume.

In the spring of 1840, I resolved on making some explorations in the valley of the upper Mississippi, with the design of gratifying a curiosity that I had long indulged in the survey and examination of certain tumuli located in that neighborhood. I had recently devoted some time and attention to the interesting valley of the Scioto, which never fails to furnish its visitors with matter of surprise and admiration, in view of the vast amount of labor by unknown hands, in the excavation of deep ditches, and in the construction of massive walls and herculean mounds of earth whose origin is hitherto inexplicable. Many of those grand and wonderful works, however, had been previously interrupted, and some almost entirely obliterated in the progress of agriculture, and the building up of towns and villages that are continually rising with magic speed on the ruins of an unknown and extinct race. I, therefore, resolved to seek the evidence of their origin on the broad spread plains of the northwestern prairies, and in the dense, dark shade of the forest, where the track of the plough had not been seen, and the sound of the axe had not yet intruded.

Thus prompted solely by a love for the investigation, without any design of publishing to the world a volume on the subject, I proceeded to St. Louis, Galena, and Prairie du Chien, the latter place being then a frontier military post within nine miles of the line drawn between civilization and barbarism. Here I commenced my far-western researches by excavation and survey. I soon discovered that the Indians were displeased with my interruption of the graves of their departed friends, many of whom they had here, in imitation of their